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APPENDIX I.

[Vide answer to question No. 2 asked by Mr. R. Veerian at the meeting of the Legislative Council held on the 3rd February 1925, page 13 supra.]

Letter from the Collector of Coimbatore, to the Commissioner of Labour, Madras, dated the 8th October 1924, No. D. Dis. 4143/24-C-4.

[Deepening of a well in Meenakshivalasu, hamlet of Poppini village, Dharapuram taluk.]

In March last certain Adi-Dravidas of Pachapalayam, hamlet of Poppini village, Dharapuram taluk, sent a petition to this office stating that their recent conversion to Christianity and their advancement in education and civilization were not liked by the village munsif, Ramaswami Kavandan, and that at his instigation the caste Kavandars had ceased to give them work and prohibited them from entering their patta fields to remove chips of fuel as usual, and as they were members of a depressed class, and were very poor, and the season unfavourable, they found their lot very miserable. They added that in view of the strong combination of the Kavandars and their virtual non-co-operation with them they even feared that there might arise quarrels and disturbances and requested that action might be taken to prevent any untoward events. This petition was forwarded to the District Superintendent of Police for necessary action. Thereupon the police made a full enquiry in the matter. In their statement before the Sub-Inspector of Vellakoil Police station on 30th April, five of these petitioners stated that their complaint was that the caste Kavandars refused to permit them to remove stray fuel from their patta lands and stopped giving them alms, and even water to drink, and were afraid that the village munsif and his brother would bring false cases against them. They admitted that they had a separate well of their own, but said that it had dried up. Three of the caste Kavandars referred to, gave a statement before the police Sub-Inspector on the same day to the effect that as the Adi-Dravidas were not working under them and had their own well, and as there was general scarcity and want on account of high prices of foodstuffs, etc., they could not afford to be very charitable to these Adi-Dravidas and therefore discontinued them permission to remove stray fuel from their patta fields for fear that they might incidentally cut branches of live-trees and sell them and thus put them and their cattle to difficulty. The village munsif gave a statement that he did not induce his caste Kavandars to range themselves against the Adi-Dravidas as stated by the petitioners and that on the other hand he complied with the suggestion of the Deputy Tahsildar and a missionary gentleman and allowed the Adi-Dravidas the use of water from his fields for about a fortnight. The Sub-Inspector reported that the Kavandars gave some of their lands to the Adi-Dravidas last year on lease for about Rs. 2,000 and that as they failed to pay them the lease amount, they were no longer willing to help them with lands

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and that the petitioners when questioned specifically about this admitted that they did not pay the lease amounts, and stated that this was due to want of rains. The Sub-Inspector advised the village munsif to help the Adi-Dravidas and returned after taking an assurance from him and other Kavandars that they would not raise their little finger against the Adi-Dravidas. Another question on which the Sub-Inspector made a report to the Deputy Superintendent of Police on the same date (2nd May 1924) was with reference to his order to give all possible help and protection to the Chucklers (Madigas) of Meenakshivalasu hamlet in their attempt to deepen a well against the alleged molestations of the caste Kavandars. The Sub-Inspector reported that this well was situated in the patta land of two widows, Angayee and Papayee (of Kavandars caste) and belonged to them and that so long as the Chucklers were faithful to the Kavandars, they were allowing them to take water from this well and also from their irrigation channels, but that, as the Chucklers had left off service under them and embraced Christianity, the pattadars objected to their taking water from their well any longer, but the Chucklers insisted that by reason of long usage they were entitled to continue to take water from the well and also to deepen it. On 25th May 1924, the Rev. Mr. Ellis of the Wesleyan Mission, Dharapuram, accompanied by a police constable and one Mr. Williams went and told the Kavandars not to object to the deepening of the well and on the next day the police Sub-Inspector went and advised the two pattadars in question not to object to the deepening of the well by the Chucklers as they were in need of water and thereupon they and the other Kavandars promised not to object. On 5th May 1924, the Deputy Superintendent of Police received a letter from the Rev. Mr. Ellis, enclosing certain petitions from the Adi-Dravidas and requesting him to stop the proposed meeting of certain caste Kavandars at Kangayam in Palayakottai Pattagar's house on 5th May 1924 to discuss some religious and caste questions, and if it were not possible to prohibit the meeting altogether, to depute a police officer to watch the proceedings and take such measures as might be necessary. The police Sub-Inspector, Kangayam, was deputed to attend the meeting. The police reports show that at the meeting of 5th May 1924 it was resolved not to allow non-Hindus for any ceremonial work or function done by the caste Kavandars, to raise the wages of Adi-Dravidas as an inducement to prevent them from embracing other religions and to arrange to convene a monthly meeting to discuss caste and religious questions. The local police have been instructed by the Deputy Superintendent of Police and the District Superintendent of Police to watch the trend of future meetings, if any, and send prompt reports for such action as might be necessary.

The facts set forth above show that the question has been watched by the police carefully throughout from the very beginning. I have also made enquiries and find that most of the allegations are exaggerated. There has been no repression adopted towards members of the depressed classes as a result of the meeting held by the Pattagars of Palayakottai and Kandiyur and one Ganapathi Pallavaroyar at Kangayam on 5th May 1924. I understand that the questions discussed at the meeting were mainly religious questions and that in this connexion the question of raising the wages of non-Christian labourers in order to prevent them from becoming Christians was only discussed. On the whole, I find that there is nothing to show that the village officers of Poppini have, in any way, used their official influence to the detriment of the Adi-Dravidas in question.